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CY YA LATER: METS TRADE R.A. DICKEY {page 28}

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NEW YORK
Tuesday, December 18, 2012

GETTY IMAGES

▶ Veronika Pozner, right, mother of Noah Pozner, arrives for her son's funeral.

Funerals begin for Connecticut slain children

Tiny caskets marked the first two funerals of massacre victims, which began yesterday Students Noah Pozner and Jack Pinto, both 6, laid to rest {page 08}

'best of' series

The best of 2012 in culture and nightlife

In the city that never sleeps, there are plenty of options for a night out From bars to theaters, our picks {pages 14-15}

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State offers to refund students affected by Sandy

NEW YORK. Gov. Andrew Cuomo said yesterday that the State University of New York would allow campus presidents to give tuition refunds to students who withdrew because of Hurricane Sandy.

Cuomo noted that SUNY campuses functioned as centers for emergency relief workers as well as shelters during the hurricane.

"SUNY students whose studies were disrupted by Hurricane Sandy need not worry about getting their money back and can instead focus their energy on their families and rebuilding," Cuomo said. The tuition waiver will be allowed under university regulations allowing "hardship" withdrawals. Usually students can only withdraw before the midpoint, but because the hurricane hit after that fall 2012 midpoint, officials modified the rule. METRO/AB

▶ Cuomo

Quoted

"SUNY students ... can instead focus their energy on their families and rebuilding." CUOMO

In the news

R train return slated for end of this week

UNDERGROUND. R train riders, you will be able to commute into work in Manhattan again. MTA officials said the R train will start up again by the end of the week, traveling between Brooklyn and Manhattan. After Sandy, MTA workers were trying for weeks to repair the tunnel under the East River. MTA officials promised yesterday that the goal is to get the R fully running by Dec. 21. METRO/AB

In the news

Cops look for deli robbers

BRONX. Police are searching for three male suspects after the armed robbery of a deli in the Bronx around 11:30 p.m. on Sunday. The suspect wielding a gun was wearing an orange hooded sweatshirt. A second man was wearing a dark-colored hooded sweatshirt, while the third was wearing a black wool coat. METRO/DT

In the news

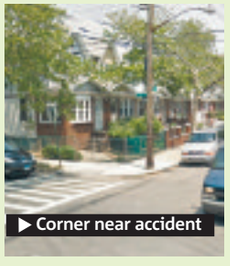
Report: SI man stabs daughter's ex-boyfriend

STATEN ISLAND. A Staten Island man reportedly stabbed his daughter's ex-boyfriend, killing him yesterday.

Henry Raftrey, 39, was reportedly rushed to the hospital after he was stabbed in the stomach around 6:45 a.m. yesterday, according to police.

A suspect was arrested on Victory Boulevard, where cops found a knife. An argument began at the home over money, where the daughter was moving out after they broke up, according to the Daily News.

Police arrested James Parker, 59, and charged him with murder. METRO/AB


▶ Corner near accident

Elderly woman hit by vehicle

BROOKLYN. A 76-year-old woman was killed in a car accident Sunday evening in Brooklyn. Nicoletta Gargano was crossing Avenue M from East 57th Street around 6:42 p.m. when a 1990 Ford driving down East 57th Street made a right turn onto Avenue M and hit her. The investigation is ongoing, but the police do not currently suspect any criminality. METRO/DT

NYC parents, teachers struggle to respond to Newtown tragedy

▶ Parents decide how to talk to kids about school shooting ▶ Dept. of Ed. expresses concern for teachers ▶ Parents urge mental health services

JOHN MOORE/GETTY IMAGES

▶ Bloomberg spoke alongside relatives of gun-violence victims yesterday.

As children returned to school the first day after a horrific mass shooting at a Connecticut elementary school, parents and educators struggled to grasp the best way to respond.

The city Department of Education, along with the teachers union, the United Federation of Teachers, sent a letter to schools, offering counseling for any students who may seek it.

It also emphasized the difficulty teachers may face in coping and moving forward.

"It is important to offer solace and support to your colleagues so we can be strong enough to take care of our students," the letter read.

Some parents struggled with talking to their children about the tragedy.

"I didn't want it to catch her off-guard," explained Michelle Imbrogno, whose daughter is in the fourth grade. She told her daughter about the shooting Monday morning before school, after an e-mail from the school indicated they might discuss it.

Kate Harrison told her 12-year-old daughter it couldn't happen at her school because it is harder to get a gun here.

"I hope it is true," Harrison said. "I couldn't think of anything else to make her feel safe."

Parents voice their concerns

Both Harrison and Imbrogno were emphatic about the importance of gun control, while Flanagan brought up the issue of mental health, expressing sympathy for families of children with mental health issues.

"I do feel that if there were better health care — and mental health care, in particular — that this kind of thing would not happen with such alarming frequency," Flanagan said. "I do think we need to have more awareness of mental health issues and how it affects families."

Quoted

"I thought about the awesome responsibility the parents of my students invest in me, and how faithfully I want to honor that."

REGIS HIGH SCHOOL TEACHER JUSTIN KICZEK

Digital comfort

The e-mail suggested ways to "help children feel safe."

▶ "Although there is no absolute guarantee that something bad will never happen, it is important to understand the difference between the possibility of something happening and the probability that it will affect our school," the e-mail read.

Bloomberg lashes out

Parents like Harrison may take solace in Mayor Michael Bloomberg's fiery response to the tragedy, as the mayor has emphasized the need for gun control multiple times since Friday.

At a press conference yesterday, he once again urged clear and quick action on the issue.

"It should be illegal to have a weapon whose only purpose is to kill large numbers of people," he said, adding that "bullets whose only purpose is to pierce armored vests" should also be banned. "Those are designed to kill police officers."

▶ Rifles

JUSTIN SULLIVAN/GETTY IMAGES

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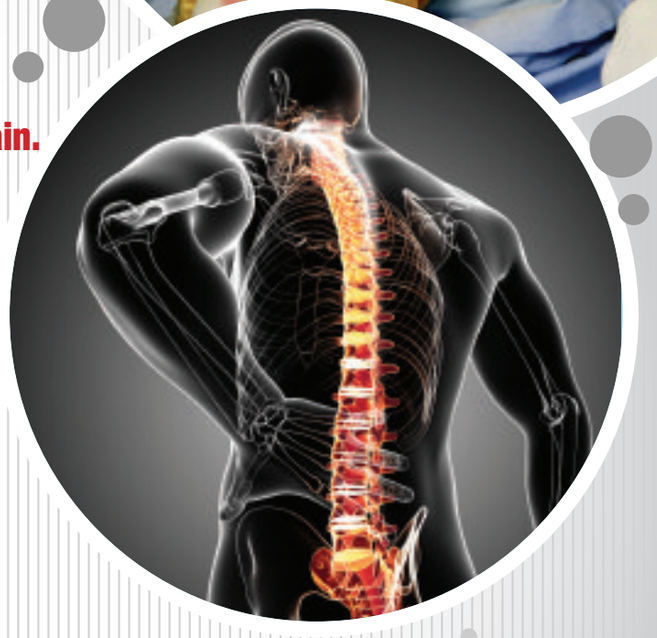

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Chains smokin': Stores multiply in 2012

RAMIN TALAIE/GETTY IMAGES

▶ If you grab your coffee at Dunkin', you have 484 store options.

Even though well-known names like Filene's Basement and Betsey Johnson closed their doors in New York this year, other chain stores got a boost.

The number of stores is up 2.4 percent since last year, a Center for an Urban Future study issued yesterday found.

ALISON BOWEN
alison.bowen@metro.us

1.8%
That bump is higher than its 1.8 percent gain between 2010 and 2011.

4.3%
The Bronx had the biggest increase.

Hundreds of cafes

No surprise to any New Yorker looking for coffee, Starbucks is the third-largest retailer and has 200 of its 272 city locations in Manhattan.

Staten not static

The zip code with the highest number of chains was in Staten Island's New Springville, likely because of its Staten Island Mall.

Bumper crop of doughnuts

Dunkin' Donuts came in as the top retailer for the Center's fifth straight year tabulating chain stores, nearing 500 stores.

484
Number of Dunkin' Donuts stores in NYC

▶ But **Subway** is on its heels, after adding 24 stores for a total of 454.

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Turtle. Hatching

▶ Meet the Bronx Zoo's newest addition.

JULIE LARSEN MAHER/WILDLIFE CONSERVATION SOCIETY

Zoo welcomes rare turtle hatchings

The Bronx Zoo welcomed five Chinese yellow-headed box turtles, officials announced yesterday. The rare turtles are critically endangered. The Wildlife Conservation Society, which runs the Bronx Zoo, has made an effort to save some of the world's most critically endangered turtles — and these turtles are considered among the 25 most endangered turtles on the globe. Fewer than 150 remain in the wild, according to zoo officials. METRO

City astronomers still starry-eyed despite NYC's light pollution

New Yorkers looking up at the night sky are often hard-pressed to find a single star.

Yet despite the intense light pollution, city astronomy enthusiasts regularly break out their telescopes in parks and on street corners.

"You can't see a lot," said Joe Delfausse, one of more than 500 members of the Amateur Astronomers Association of New York. "But you can see some things really well, and that includes the moon and the large planets."

Jupiter, for example, is blazing right now, he explained.

"If you look in the eastern sky after sunset, you can't miss it," he said, adding that its biggest moons are visible with the help of good binoculars or a telescope. This time of year, it's also possible to see Venus, the International Space Station and constellations such as Orion, the Big Dipper and Cassiopeia.

Urban Park Ranger Lena Lam said she even saw a shooting star last week during the Geminid meteor shower.

"For Brooklyn, that's not so bad," she said, laughing.

On Saturday evening, the Urban Park Rangers held a stargazing event in Prospect Park. But the skies clouded over just before it got underway.

"Probably 99 percent of people in New York have never, ever looked through a telescope before," Delfausse said. "It's a life-changing experience."

Upcoming events

Get out your telescopes and maps: Free stargazing events are coming to New York City.

- The Urban Park Rangers and the Amateur Astronomers Association of New York both hold free astronomy events throughout the year.
- This Thursday, the AAA will host a Winter Solstice Telescope Party at the American Museum of Natural History.
- On Friday, it will host a Winter Solstice Star Party at Belvedere Castle in Central Park.

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The first Newtown funerals take place

Mourners in Newtown, Conn., headed for the first two of 20 funerals of schoolchildren massacred in their classroom as the rest of the nation anxiously sent children back to school yesterday with tightened security.

Within hours of the school day starting, lockdowns were declared in nearby Connecticut and New York towns. In New Jersey, one high school's morning announcements included an added warning not to let strangers into the building.

Newtown's schools remained closed yesterday, the first academic day since the 20-year-old gunman claimed 28 lives, including his mother's and his own.

Tiny caskets marked the first wave of funerals for the 20 children and six adults killed in the shooting rampage at Sandy Hook Elementary School on Friday. Noah Pozner and Jack Pinto, both 6 years old, will be laid to rest on Monday afternoon.

Their funerals come a day after President Barack Obama visited Newtown to comfort the families. Obama's remarks were heralded on Monday morning by relatives of teacher Victoria Soto, 27, who was killed as she tried to protect her first-grade students.

"He really made us feel like she really was a hero and that everyone should know it," her brother, Carlos Soto, told "CBS This Morning."

All the dead children were 6 or 7 years old. The school principal of Sandy Hook Elementary, the school psychologist and four teachers were also gunned down.

Noah was the youngest victim of rampage, and his twin sister, Arielle, escaped unhurt. The family's rabbi has said he encouraged Noah's mother to focus on her other four children amid the grief.

Jack was a wrestler who loved sports. The New York Giants receiver Victor Cruz played Sunday's football game with the boy's name written all over his cleats and gloves.

REUTERS

Still closed

Schools remained closed in Newtown as faculty members met to decide when they would open again. To keep children occupied on a drizzling Monday, youth sports groups set up an indoor field day with arts and crafts, athletics and board games.

GETTY IMAGES

▶ A man speaks to his young son yesterday at the funeral for Jack Pinto, 6, one of the victims of the Dec. 14 Sandy Hook Elementary School shooting in Newtown, Conn.

School scares force some into lockdown mode

Cautious educators and police locked down schools at the first hint of trouble yesterday as nervous parents sent their kids back to school for the first time since the massacre at Sandy Hook Elementary School in Newtown, Conn.

Educators fearful of "copycats" or troublemakers who might phone in empty threats grappled with how to respond and whether to discuss Friday's shootings with children.

Safety was balanced against concerns over frightening children unnecessarily. Politicians debated whether to fortify schools with armed guards.

At least three school districts near Newtown went into lockdown yesterday after a citizen reported a "suspicious person" at a train station near an elementary school in Ridgefield, about 20 miles from Sandy Hook Elementary School.

The lockdown was lifted about two hours later.

REUTERS

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Cliff gets less steep; watch out for elephants

Obama, Boehner taking 'cliff' notes

▶ Boehner knows his way around the White House.

CHIP SOMODEVILLA/GETTY IMAGES

Obama, Boehner 'cliff' meet again

President Barack Obama and top Republican John Boehner met at the White House yesterday as hopes rose that Washington will be able to head off steep tax hikes and spending cuts that could push the economy into recession next year.

The 45-minute meeting is a further sign that talks to avert the "fiscal cliff" could be yielding progress after weeks of stalemate, and aides from both parties said they were optimistic that a deal could be reached in coming days.

"We're getting close," said one Democratic aide who added, however, that a deal is not imminent.

Although both sides still had major differences, investors were cheered by signs of progress. The Standard & Poor's 500 index was up 0.95 percent at midday.

"The fiscal cliff is starting to get ironed out," said Frank Davis, director of sales and trading at LEK Securities. **REUTERS**

Home on the rage

Israel OKs 1.5K more settlement homes

Israel approved plans to build 1,500 more Jewish settler homes in east Jerusalem yesterday, an official said, days after provoking international protests against a project for another 3,000 such homes on land it captured in the 1967 Six-Day War.

Washington had condemned the latest plans, for ultra-Orthodox neighborhood Ramat Shlomo. Palestinians see the settlements as obstacles to achieving independent statehood. **REUTERS**

▶ Israel and Palestine

JAAFAR ASHTIYEH/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

Elephants gone wild

Nepal soldiers hunt for killer elephant

Soldiers in Nepal are on the hunt for a wild elephant after it strayed into villages in the southern part of the Himalayan nation and killed four people in three months, officials said yesterday.

The elephant walked into a thatched house in Gardi village adjoining Chitwan National Park, 50 miles south of Kathmandu on Saturday, pulled an elderly couple from bed and trampled them to death, said Shiva Ram Gelal, assistant district administrator from Bharatpur. **REUTERS**

Can we talk about this?

Iran: Stalemate on nukes must end

Iran's foreign minister said on Monday a way must be found to end the deadlock with major powers over its nuclear program, an Iranian news agency reported, but he offered no new initiative on how to achieve this. Ali Akbar Salehi's comments came ahead of an expected resumption of diplomacy, perhaps next month, aimed at preventing the decade-old nuclear dispute from degenerating into a Middle East war that could damage an already fragile world economy. Israel has threatened military action to prevent its arch-enemy from acquiring nuclear weapons. Iran denies any such goal. **REUTERS**

1 Israel is believed to be the region's only nuclear-armed power.

Don't try to 'friend' him

Iranian leader 'likes' Facebook

Facebook has an unlikely new member: Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei.

Launched a few days ago, the Facebook page "Khamenei.ir" displays photographs of the 73-year-old cleric alongside speeches and pronouncements by the man who wields ultimate power in the Islamic Republic. While there are several other Facebook pages already devoted to Khamenei, the new one appeared to be officially authorized, rather than merely the work of admirers. Both U.S.-based social media sites are blocked in Iran by a wide-reaching government censor, but they are still commonly used by millions of Iranians. **REUTERS**

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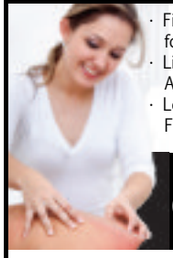

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Mamma mia! ... Do you deliver?

Five Italian chefs have just set a new record for the world's largest pizza — which is 130 feet wide and covers an area of nearly 13,000 square feet.

Such was the size of the massive margherita made in Rome that the chefs had to bake the dough in 5,234 separate batches over a two-day period.

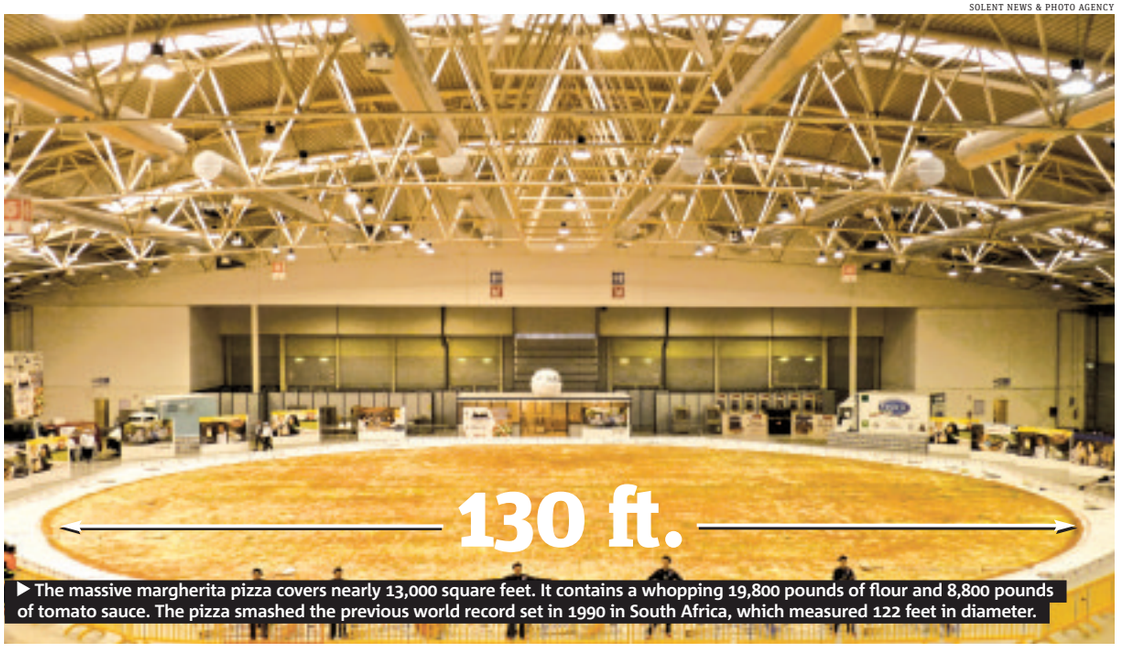
A quintet of specialist pizza chefs worked around the clock for 48 hours to create it. METRO WORLD NEWS

Quoted

"We named the pizza Ottavia [after Roman Emperor (Octavian) Augustus Caesar] to symbolize the hope of a great economic and cultural revival."

DOVILIO NARDI, HEAD OF THE ITALIAN CHEF QUINTET

SOLENT NEWS & PHOTO AGENCY



▶ The massive margherita pizza covers nearly 13,000 square feet. It contains a whopping 19,800 pounds of flour and 8,800 pounds of tomato sauce. The pizza smashed the previous world record set in 1990 in South Africa, which measured 122 feet in diameter.

Ingredients

- **9.9 tons** of gluten-free flour mixed with 11,274 liters of water (2,480 gallons). That's more than 45,000 glasses of water.
- **5 tons** of tomato sauce. That's enough sauce for more than 11,330 servings of spaghetti bolognese.
- **1,488 pounds** of margarine.
- **551 pounds** of salt — more than 40,000 times an adult's recommended daily serving.
- **275 pounds** of parmesan cheese.
- **100 kilos** (220 pounds) of lettuce.
- **25 kilos** (55 pounds) of balsamic vinegar.
- **1,354 liters** (298 gallons) of yeast.

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MOVADO·TISSOT·RADO·HAMILTON·JORG GRAY·CITIZEN·INVICTA·CALVIN KLEIN·ICE WATCH

▶ Tracee Chimo stars in "Bad Jews" (along with Michael Zegen), playing at the Black Box Theatre through Dec. 30.

JOAN MARCUS

▶ Author readings are anything but stodgy at Housing Works.

The best of 2012: Nightlife and culture

'Best of' series

All week long, Metro will be highlighting our selections of the city's best — from dining spots to health and beauty oases — of 2012. Check back tomorrow for our picks in retail and fashion.

Best new arena in the city:

Barclays Center
620 Atlantic Ave., Brooklyn, 212-359-6387, www.barclayscenter.com
Sure, it's the only new arena in the city (and considering the logistical nightmare it was getting it built, probably the only new arena in a long long time), but kudos to the Barclays for creating a stadium that seems chic. After all, when was the last time you felt cool saying, "I'm catching a show at MSG"?

Great place to catch a show that won't hurt your feet:

City Winery
155 Varick St., 212-608-0555 www.citywinery.com
Some nights you want to rage against the dying light with domestic beers and sweaty concert-goers at the Bowery Ballroom, and some nights you just want to catch some top-notch music while you sit at an honest-to-God table that isn't covered in stale beer. For those nights (and, well, most any nights you want to see music), go to City Winery. Not only does it let you enjoy music in a refined setting, but it also hosts neat workshops and free music on Tuesday nights during the summer on its outdoor stage.

Best spot to catch the next big-lit-thing perform a reading:

Housing Works
126 Crosby St., 212-334-3324 www.housingworks.org
We know, we know: Book readings bring to mind tweedy old white dudes stuttering into a podium. But the events at Housing Works are — dare we say it — hip. We're especially fond the readings by Tumblr authors — a kind of next-generation reading series.

Best rooftop bar that won't worsen your fear of heights:

Treehouse at The James NY
27 Grand St., 212-465-2000 www.jameshotels.com/new-york/
The multitiered deck at The James doesn't go very high, so you can still make out what's happening below you. Enjoy the views or just people-watch from the banquettes inside. Order from David Burke's rotating dinner menu, or swing by after dinner for $5 drinks and snacks such as dumplings, tacos and a killer dessert menu boasting donut holes and deep-fried PB&J sandwiches (all $5).

Best new South Slope drinking oasis:

Sea Witch
703 Fifth Ave., Brooklyn, 347-227-7166, www.seawitchnyc.com
As you get into the higher-numbered streets in Brooklyn, Park Slope becomes less of the yuppie haven it's known to be. That's why this low-key outlier is perfectly suited to its borderline locale. With nautical murals adorning the walls and a warm, cozy atmosphere, this South Slope watering hole is a neighborhood favorite.

▶ Find bespoke cocktails in an elegant atmosphere at Ward III.

CREDIT: GABI PORTER

Best underground club that'll make Bushwick seem like the new frontier:

Cheap Storage
49 Wyckoff Ave., between Starr Street and Willoughby Avenue, Brooklyn
With no phone number and no website to speak of, Cheap Storage is off the radar and probably wants to stay that way. Stepping into this venue makes you feel like the aughts never happened, rave culture is still cool and certain civil liberties haven't yet been banned.

Best Queens theater that plays offbeat indie movies:

Kew Gardens Cinemas
81-05 Lefferts Boulevard, Queens, 718-441-9835, www.kewgardenstheatre.com
Who said you have to trek to Manhattan to catch indie flicks? Queens residents enjoy

JOAN MARCUS

JULIE TURKEWITZ

▶ Alongside Kate Arrington, Michael Shannon is a scene-stealer in "Grace," running through Jan. 6.

▶ Sea Witch welcomes South Slope dwellers with its cozy interior.

COURTESY OF SEA WITCH

▶ Have a seat and watch top-notch entertainment like Clap Your Hands Say Yeah's Alec Ounsworth at City Winery.

GETTY IMAGES

underground films in the comfort of their own borough thanks to the Kew Gardens Cinema, which has been around since the 1930s. This charming old movie house plays the same hits you'll find at Angelika or Lincoln Center, along with a selection of foreign films, too. Bonus: On Bargain Tuesdays and Thursdays, tickets are just $7.

Best place to drink free:

Name Night at No Idea Bar
30 E. 20th St., 212-777-0100, www.noideabar.com
It's a pretty sweet deal to show up and have your drinks taken care of when it's not your birthday. Check the monthly calendar at www.noideabar.com to find out when it's your turn to celebrate a night of gratis booze. The rules: Free drinks between 5 and 11 p.m., and you must bring friends.

Best bar to order whatever the hell you want, they'll make it:

Ward III
111 Reade St., 212-240-9194
www.ward3tribeca.com
Bespoke cocktails are the name of the game at this swanky, low-lit space, which carries a number of rare whiskeys. Tell them what you like — sweet, herbal, dry, something else? — and what kind of booze you prefer and they'll pick your poison. Just don't blame them if you go in for round two, three or four. Temper your drinks with eats like duck nachos and lamb shank tacos.

Best bar to take a date that's going sour:

Barcade
388 Union Ave., Brooklyn, 718-302-6464, www.barcadebrooklyn.com
The conversation reached a lull three drinks ago, and your date is now just flat-out starting to annoy you. Can't escape? Hit Barcade for its wall of old-school video games, and let the silence speak for itself.

Best simultaneous use of eating and walking:

Original Greenwich Village Food and Culture Walking Tour
$49, tickets at www.foodsofny.com/greenwichvillage.php
You frequent the West Village, but do you know its history? Learn (and taste) it during this three-hour trek up and down the nabe's tree-lined streets, where along the way you'll wolf down six tastings from some of the area's most noted venues, like Joe's Pizza and Murray's Cheese Shop.

Best museum for fully immersing yourself in old New York:

The Merchant's House
29 E. Fourth St., 212-777-1089
www.merchantshouse.org
The Merchant's House Museum is a living testament to the 19th century: It's the only family home in NYC from that era preserved inside and out. Built in 1832 and inhabited by a wealthy family for almost 100 years, the museum has over 3,000 items — from furniture to clothing to photos — on view.

Best theater for the perfect downtown date-night combo of cheap drinks, quality shows and good seats:

SoHo Playhouse
15 Vandam St., 212-691-1555
www.sohoplayhouse.com
With uninhibited and gut-busting comedies like "Triassic Parq" and "5 Lesbians Eating a Quiche" running alongside heartfelt dramas such as "The Old Man and the Moon," SoHo Playhouse is an intimate, 200-seat venue packed with not-to-be-missed plays (at prices you can actually afford!) that's blessedly off the beaten path of the Great White Way. Be sure to arrive early for a drink at the wallet-friendly bar/cabaret downstairs.

Best all-in-one upscale venue for cocktails, dinner and a show without stepping foot outside:

The Public Theater
425 Lafayette St., 212-539-8500
www.publictheater.org
Having recently completed a $40 million renovation in the fall of 2012, The Public Theater is enjoying a new attitude along with its long-overdue facelift. The nonprofit, best-known for its 50 years of Shakespeare in the Park offerings, now boasts not only the adjacent Joe's Pub for shows and drinks, but also The Library restaurant upstairs and a bright lobby downstairs that's welcoming for show-goers to linger and socialize between acts.

Best stage actor/actress to name-drop to sound in-the-know:

Michael Shannon ("Uncle Vanya," "Grace")
Tracee Chimo ("Harvey," "Bad Jews")
"Grace": Cort Theatre, 138 W. 48th St., 212-239-6200, www.graceonbroadway.com
"Bad Jews": Black Box Theatre, 111 W. 46th St., 212-719-1300, www.roundabouttheatre.org/
It's almost too easy to crow about seeing well-established, big-name stage stars like Al Pacino or Patti LuPone. Your family back home might be impressed — but to name-check with authority in Midtown, try catching Michael Shannon in "Grace" before Jan. 6 or Tracee Chimo in "Bad Jews" through Dec. 30. Being able to comment on his riveting intensity or her blindsiding turnabouts will get you true theater cred, as will snapping up tickets to whatever these two show-stealers turn up in next.

Best up-and-coming multimedia performance company to show you something unexpected:

Third Rail Projects ("Steampunk Haunted House," "Then She Fell")
www.thirdrailprojects.com
Did you just love Punchdrunk's "Sleep No More" and feel compelled to gush over it every time a friend's in town asking what to do? That's sooo 2011. Refresh your immersive theater vocabulary with Third Rail Project's "Then She Fell," which manifested through years of work into an interactive show that turns "Alice in Wonderland" on its head and, catering to only 15 audience members at a time, is constantly sold out. Watch for its newest incarnation coming to Manhattan in 2013.

myentertainment

THE WORD

Metro's **Dorothy Robinson** shares her take on the world of gossip @dorothyatmetro dorothy.robinson@metro.us

The feed ...

Checking in with some of Hollywood's biggest names to see what they've been up to — in their own words, in 140 characters or fewer.

Today, Hugh Grant is speaking in code, Zachary Quinto is having trouble with social media and Joan Rivers is getting a kick out of the seasons.

@HackedOffHugh
Taking gooner nephew to Emirates. Thanks to all Walcotts. Will try not to start ruck.

@ZacharyQuinto
lately been feeling like the disgruntled child of divorced parents twitter and instagram. pull it together you guys. this is embarrassing.

@Joan_Rivers
I love celebrity Christmas carols. in Jessica Simpson's house they'll stand around the piano singing, "I Saw Daddy Kissing Santa Claus."

Quinto

The big ol' babies of 2012

The past few days have been rough news-wise, so I'm going to dedicate today's column to some of the biggest celebrity babies who made their appearance this year. That's right: lots and lots of adorable, innocent, cute babies!

Who: Blue Ivy Carter
Parents: Beyonce and Jay-Z
Given the media attention surrounding the birth of Blue Ivy, it's pretty surprising the world didn't tip off its axis when she came into the world on Jan. 7.

Who: Samuel Affleck
Parents: Jennifer Garner and Ben Affleck
The movie star duo welcomed its first son on Feb. 27. Not much is known about baby Sam, other than he'll probably be ridiculously good-looking and talented.

Who: Jack Pratt
Parents: Anna Farris and Chris Pratt
Not a lot of fanfare was made about baby Jack's somewhat premature appearance on Aug. 25. Instead of appearing on any magazine covers to showboat the news, new dad Chris Pratt tweeted this message to his followers: "It's a boy! Thanks for all your kind words. In lieu of gifts we ask that you mouth kiss a stranger."

GETTY IMAGES

Look! Famous baby toesies!

Who: Edward Duke Rancic
Parents: Giuliana and Bill Rancic
After years of unsuccessful IVF treatments and a miscarriage and then a breast cancer diagnosis, the Rancic family finally had a bit of good news: Their baby Edward Duke was born via a gestational carrier on Aug. 29.

Who: Tennessee Toth
Parents: Reese Witherspoon and Jim Toth
The baby, whose name still sounds like a brand of whiskey to me, was born on Sept. 27.

Who: Maxwell Johnson
Parents: Jessica Simpson and Eric Johnson
After following the longest pregnancy known to man, Simpson finally birthed baby Maxi on May 1. And now she's allegedly pregnant again. That, or maybe she's just constantly gestating.

The first Simpson bump — not to be confused with her current one

Coming attractions for 2013

There will be more celebrity babies in 2013, including one from Channing Tatum and his wife Jenna Dewan-Tatum. It was just announced yesterday the two are expecting. And, of course, the royal baby (babies?) will (hopefully) be making his or her (or their!) appearance in 2013, as will one from Jenna Bush and husband Henry Hager. Babies!

Talking points

Trawick is about to leave Spears?

Britney Spears' relationship with **Jason Trawick** may be about to end, though the "X Factor" host and pop star is apparently the last to know, according to Hollyscoop. "Jason has told Britney's entire family that he's planning to leave her so Britney will have a support system when he breaks the bad news," a source says of the couple, who are reportedly spending the holidays apart. Trawick is said to be waiting until Spears' work on the current season of "the X Factor" is wrapped before dumping her.

Damon: About those gay rumors ...

Matt Damon has been dodging gay rumors ever since he and best friend **Ben Affleck** burst onto the scene with "Good Will Hunting," but he's avoided acknowledging them — until now. "I never denied those rumors because I was offended and didn't want to offend my friends who were gay — as if being gay were some kind of f—ing disease," he tells Playboy magazine. "It put me in a weird position in that sense."

Not gay!

Joe Simpson took out a life insurance policy on daughter

Tina Simpson has a new reason to be cross with estranged husband **Joe Simpson**, as he reportedly took out a $4.5 million life insurance policy on their daughter, **Jessica Simpson**, without telling Tina, according to Radar Online. The policy was drafted eight years ago, but Tina and Jessica didn't find out until last week. "Tina found out about yet another one of Joe's secrets and couldn't believe what she was hearing," a source says.

Freeman denies Facebook quote

Not so fast, Facebook users. A lengthy quote attributed to **Morgan Freeman** in the wake of the Newtown, Conn., elementary school shooting tragedy has been making the rounds on the social-networking site suggesting media coverage encouraged the shooter. The only problem is those aren't Freeman's words. "Morgan neither made statements or posted those statements. We are trying to find out who did, but they did not originate from him," a source for the actor tells E! News.

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Saturday rocked around the world

1: Hugh Jackman and **Anne Hathaway** attended a special screening and Q&A of "Les Miserables" in Beverly Hills.

2: Are they going to eat one another? **Lady Gaga** performed with **The Rolling Stones** at the Prudential Center in Newark.

3: Carey Mulligan and **Mamie Gummer** were guests at a dinner for the Alzheimer's Society in Gstaad, Switzerland.

4: Stevie Wonder (sans moustache) performed during his 17th annual House Full Of Toys Concert in Los Angeles.

5: Leona Lewis sang at the Free Radio Live gig at LG Arena in Birmingham, England.

6: Big Boi performed at The Pool After Dark at Harrah's Resort in Atlantic City

1: BRIAN TO/WIREIMAGE
2: KEVIN MAZUR/WIREIMAGE
3: DAVE M. BENETT/GETTY IMAGES
4: LESTER COHEN/WIREIMAGE
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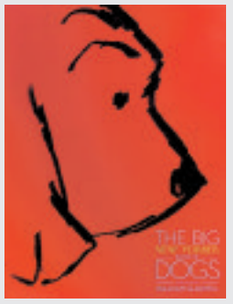


For the aunt who loves animals

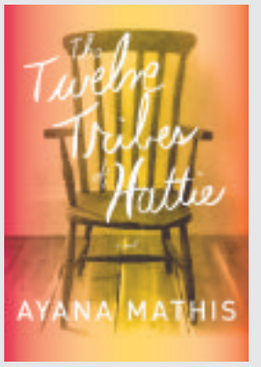
'The Big New Yorker Book of Dogs'
Foreword by Malcolm Gladwell
This excellent, handsome and hefty compendium of all things canine (cartoons, essays, poems, humor pieces and more) is culled from the famed magazine's archives.

The nature-loving father-in-law

'Bird Watcher's Bible: A Complete Treasury'
Edited by Jonathan Alderfer
Even for nonbirders, the "Bird Watcher's Bible" is a surprisingly readable and interesting collection of interesting bird facts, how-to hints, folklore and history. The beautiful illustrations are a treat to gaze upon.

Your brother's new girlfriend

'The Twelve Tribes of Hattie'
by Ayana Mathis
Don't know anything about this strange newbie who will be attending Christmas dinner with your family? Don't despair: "The Twelve Tribes of Hattie" is Oprah's new book club book, meaning it's a book she'll be familiar with — after all, everyone knows Oprah. (And if she doesn't, there's a problem.)

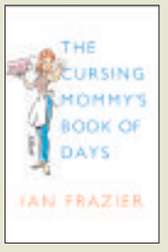


That one cousin you know nothing about

'The Chinese Takeout Cookbook'
By Diana Kuan
Everyone eats Chinese food. But you can't wrap up a pint of General Tso's and put it under a tree, can you? "The Chinese Takeout Book" is full of simple recipes that anyone can whip up, even if you're unsure of your cousin's cooking ability — or name.

The fun mother-in-law

'The Cursing Mommy's Book of Days'
by Ian Frazier
This hilarious "diary" written in the voice of a frazzled, tipsy woman, known as the Cursing Mommy, will be an apt gift for any family member who has a sense of humor — or a slight cursing problem.



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Ralphie hits the stage

Peter Billingsley — aka the kid from 'A Christmas Story' — is now behind the scenes on Broadway Yes, he still has his Red Ryder BB gun

GETTY IMAGES

If you go

Peter Billingsley co-produced "A Christmas Story, The Musical," playing through Dec. 30 at the Lunt-Fontanne Theatre (205 W. 46th St.). For tickets, call 212-239-6200 or visit www.achristmasstorythemusical.com.

Instead of getting shot in the eye, Peter Billingsley is calling the shots. The 41-year-old actor and director — who portrayed the bespectacled Ralphie in 1983's "A Christmas Story" — is now producing the film's adaptation on Broadway. This is the fourth year the show has run, the third year that Billingsley has been involved, and the first year it has appeared on Broadway. He explains why Ralphie was the perfect character for the stage and which scenes were most fun to re-create.

You had been approached about adapting "A Christmas Story" before, but you said you were never interested. Why was this the right opportunity?

I knew that there had been some notions of doing either sequels or remakes. I thought it was a really bad idea — why would you remake a great movie? But to do an adaptation to a new format that allows you to go to places that the film couldn't because of [format restrictions]; that was exciting. And the notion of a musical was particularly exciting because this film has sort of an eccentric tone to it. There are a lot of fantasy sequences. Ralphie's a dreamer. It was the perfect character for musical theater.

Were there any scenes you were particularly excited to bring to the stage?

"Ralphie to the Rescue" is a fun classroom fantasy which is similar to the one when the robbers come over the fence and he's protecting his family — it's that little cowboy moment in the movie, but we turn it into a major Western hoedown. I think that's why audiences like it, because they don't feel that it betrays the movie. You owe them a flagpole scene. You owe them a turkey. You owe them a Chinese restaurant. They want to see those scenes because that's what in the film.

Q&A

Do you still watch the film when it comes on TV?

You know, I have studied the film just over the last few years in relation to the musical, but it's more fast-forwarding to scenes and kind reminding myself of certain things. It's kind of a point of analysis now. [Laughs] But invariably on Christmas [my family] will turn it on and I'll stop and watch it and kind of enjoy it. ... I'm pretty familiar with it at this point.

Did you have any concerns about adapting the film?

I'm very protective [of the material], so I think that there was a lot of stuff that I wanted to make sure stayed true to the movie. I knew Bob Clark very well — he directed the movie — so I always felt that I had a lot of insight into it and what the filmmakers had wanted. The one thing I was concerned about was I didn't want audiences to feel like, oh, here's just a retread off a successful movie.

The kids in the show are all so talented. As a former child actor, did you give them any showbiz advice?

I always tell them enjoy it, because if it's not enjoyed there's no point in doing it. ... Gosh, when I was kid doing commercials it was a very different business. I was before Macaulay Culkin. There was kids prices. He was the first kid to get adult prices. Now, these Disney Channel kids are making more than the adults are. I think that puts an awful lot of pressure on at a very young age.

Do you still have your BB gun?

I do. It's probably very valuable, I guess. I keep some of my memorabilia at a climate-controlled storage facility. The bunny suit is there as well.

MEREDITH ENGEL
meredith.engel@metro.us

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ROB BLACKBURN

Don't try this at home

Instead, come to the New Vic and watch the pros of Circus Oz do it

The fun starts before the show starts, as slow-motion stage sweepers and performers in costume mingle with arriving fans. Circus Oz, from Melbourne, Australia, brings its special brand of smart, cheeky fun to the New Vic — piling eight acrobats on a single bicycle and showing off their extraordinary strength and derring-do with ordinary objects strewn around the floor.

In "From the Ground Up," the latest show by a troupe of 14 multiskilled performers whose comedy is leavened by a concern for social justice, women hold up half the sky, play drums in the wonderful band and loudly promote their own small businesses. They also suffer wedgies from their male compatriots and otherwise engage in the rough-and-tumble life that construction workers and circus folk have in common. One fine young lady juggles balls and a table with her toes. An ongoing joke mocks the fitness craze while demonstrating its benefits. Hip-hop abounds; a riff about Obama emerges from the "House of Represent."

Sloppiness is part of the show's charm; it's set on a building site, with hardhats and a huge steel beam that starts as the innards of the grandest piano you've ever seen and morphs into a base for acrobatics. The expert performers create the illusion that their acts are just out of the range of your average coordinated kid — but don't be fooled. The daring feats on trapeze and poles and unlikely equipment keep your heart in your mouth while the mildly raunchy verbal byplay and failed card tricks hold the attention of the adults who actually buy the tickets.

ELIZABETH ZIMMER
elizabeth.zimmer@metro.us

If you go

Circus Oz
Through Dec. 30
New Victory Theater
229 W. 42nd St.
$11-$55, 646-223-3010
www.newvictory.org

TV watch list

TYLER GOLDEN/NBC

"The Voice" finalists

'The Voice'

REALITY. America unceremoniously sends one singer home, while you better believe mentor judges Christina Aguilera and Cee Lo Green will get a fireworks display of a farewell as they temporarily leave the show to promote a new album (Xtina) and work on a sitcom for NBC ("The Lady Killer"). Oh, yeah — and a Season 3 winner will be announced! Terry McDermott, Cassadee Pope and Nicholas David vie for that $100,000 recording contract. **Season finale, 9 p.m., NBC**

'Ramsay's Christmas Cookalong'

SPECIAL. The only donkeys in this culinary-themed Christmas special hosted by hot-tempered "Hell's Kitchen" star Gordon Ramsay are the ones in the manger scene — not in his kitchen, for a change. **10 p.m., BBC America**

'Mankind: The Story of Us'

DOCUMENTARY. As man conquers new frontiers in the 19th and 20th centuries, war and devastating effects on the environment are results. Will humans survive? Guess you have to watch! **Season finale, 9 p.m., History Channel**

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Weekly Photo Tip

Tips for Terrific Holiday
How Histograms
Can Help Improve Snowy Shots:

If you've ever wondered what that little graph is on the back of your camera's LCD screen, it's actually a very useful tool called a histogram. A histogram can help determine if your photos are underexposed or overexposed. A histogram is a graph of the exposure of each image. You'll find the 'white' illustrated at the far right of the graph and the 'black' on the far left. A well-exposed image will generally show points close to both ends. Each histogram graph tells a story about the exposure of the image and can guide you in making adjustments so that images are properly exposed.

For winter shooting, a histogram can be very useful in showing if bright white snow is spiking your exposure and causing your image to appear 'blown out' or overexposed. If this happens while you're shooting, you can trick your camera by adjusting your +/- compensation button to adjust for this situation. And, if you're shooting in RAW format, you'll have the ability to adjust your highlights and mid-tones in post-processing if necessary. That said, it's a lot easier to get the shot the way you want it the first time as opposed to having to make corrections at a later time.

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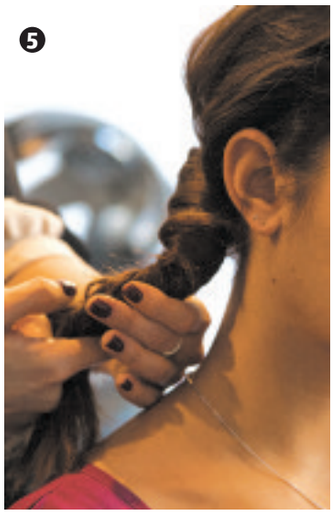
Party hair in minutes

When you don't have time to hit the salon, take matters into your own hands This elegant chignon is beginner-friendly and doesn't mind getting messy

Sometimes you just can't make it in to a salon before a party, but your dress begs for a more exciting look than your everyday blowout. This romantic, side-swept bun will do the trick for all your fancy events and only looks better as it gets messier. Emma Heser, senior stylist at Cutler/Redken salon, promised us that we can whip together the style in less than 10 minutes. Here, she shows us how.

Tip

"Second day hair works best," says Heser.



Heser's instructions

1 Spray dry shampoo and massage it into your hair with your fingers to create texture. "This will prevent hair pins from slipping out and give your hair a little boost so it doesn't look limp," says Heser.

2 Section your hair. Working from the nape to the crown, backcomb each section. To do this, start a few inches away from the scalp and tease hair toward the scalp. Don't backcomb along your part.

3 Create your part.

4 Pull your hair back like you would a low ponytail — but don't use a brush. Grab hair loosely with your fingers to keep the texture.

5 Bring your hair around to one side by your ear and loosely twist it into a bun shape. Tuck the ends under.

6 Insert a pin into the bun and hook it in. Add more pins around the bun until you feel it's secure, about four.

7 Add a few pins in to neaten any hair that pokes out, though a little messiness looks better. "It's more fun and less contrived," says Heser.

8 Spray hair with a medium-hold hair spray. For the front, stick your fingers into the hair and then spray — this will keep the dreamy lift and ridges in your 'do. Now you're ready to throw on a dress and roll.

TINA CHADHA
tina.chadha@metro.us

Put blended family drama on ice this holiday season

- For step-families, holidays are simultaneously the most exciting and most stressful time of the year
- Metro's tips on assuring that time is shared fairly for everyone

The calendar for the holiday season fills up fast, both with festive gatherings and all the preparations for them. It can be challenging to find time for everything — and when you're dealing with the conflicting demands that come with today's blended families, those challenges can seem insurmountable.

In order to make sure both you and your ex feel that time is shared fairly, you have to start with figuring out what "fair" means to everyone involved, says Katie Dunleavy, assistant professor of communication at La Salle University.

"Is 'fairness' about dividing holiday time equally, or are particular events more important to one parent or the other?" she asks. For instance, if one parent's family tradition is that Christmas Eve dinner is the highlight of the holiday, he or she might be fine with not seeing the kids at all on Christmas Day. For others, dividing the day in half may feel fair.

Dunleavy stresses the importance of talking honestly with your ex about how you're feeling. "It is likely that there will be feelings of guilt, loneliness and possibly annoyance when making decisions about spending time with family members on holidays," she says. "Acknowledging these feelings to others won't eliminate the problem, but it will alleviate some of the emotions attached."

What if there is an event that both parents want to attend, like a school play or a religious service? Dunleavy says they should put aside their conflicts for the length of the event. "As the children grow up, there will be future events — graduations, weddings — that require that both parents be in same vicinity and share in the celebration."

"Don't ask children to decide who they want to spend time with. It puts way too much pressure on them. This can lead to feelings of guilt for younger children; older children may use it as an excuse to disconnect with the family as a whole."
KATIE DUNLEAVY

Don't feel crummy! Holidays can be tough for step-families.

JUDY WEIGHTMAN
letters@metro.us

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Hot holiday toys

Eyana Carballo guides Metro through gifts for babies and young children for the holiday season. Whether you've been a parent for years or are new to the toy-shopping game, let Carballo of the new baby boutique Stork in Crown Heights help you find just the right holiday gift.

1 Manhattan Toy's Whoozit, $16. Carballo recommends the eye-catching line of plush toys by Whoozit because they can be attached to a stroller keeping your baby or toddler occupied — and the toys off the ground.

2 Kickboard USA Scooters, $85-$135. Carballo points to scooters as being a huge seller this year. Two of her biggest sellers are the Mini Kick Scooter for kids as young as 3 and the Maxi Kick Scooter which is designed for kids older than 5, both by Kickboard USA. They're fun — but parents love them because they help with balance, coordination and motor skills.

3 Baby beads by Manhattan Toy, $16. These brightly-painted, wooden baby beads help develop fine motor skills, Carballo says.

4 Draw and Splash Markers by Manhattan Toy, $13. Kids can draw all over your tub during bath time and you can wash it away once they're squeaky clean.

5 Polka Dot What baby leggings, $17. Carballo says these designer two-tone leggings are a very popular baby shower gift option.

6 Piggy Paint's nontoxic nail polishes and remover, $10 each. These nail polishes are odorless and eco-friendly and sure to delight any young Brooklyn Diva who finds them in her stocking on Christmas morning.

MARY SHELL

7
The classics, $10. Carballo recommends classics such as slinkies, pickup sticks and yo-yos (all made by Ridley, $10 each) as a sure-bet gift.

Stork delivers

Carballo's boutique Stork opened in 2011 on a rapidly changing stretch of Franklin Avenue in Brooklyn. The shop offers a slew of locally designed apparel and accessories — something Carballo is proud of. "There are so many artists that live within steps of this store. It feels good that you're spreading the word," she says.

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Letters

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The times are a-changin' — so must gun control

If Adam Lanza had walked into the Newtown elementary school with a machete or a baseball bat or a bow and arrow, he could not have caused the destruction of human life which he did with an assault rifle. I believe we will learn that he discharged hundreds of rounds in his spree.

Experience has taught us that people like Lanza exist and that they are difficult to detect. But we have to see that our national posture toward availability of guns has a significant affect on the destruction these kinds of people can cause.

This posture seems to be a presumption that persons can only be denied access to guns for cause. This is based on the constitutional notion of maintaining a militia. I would suggest that we should reverse this presumption and assume that a person be granted access to guns only for significant cause. A claimant would have to show that he or she is eminently qualified for the position of militia before being granted the opportunity to possess a gun and overwhelmingly and peculiarly qualified to be the possessor of several guns.

At Virginia Tech and the Aurora, Colo., 30 to 50 people were shot. If the shooter had access only to a switch blade, the statistic would have been radically different.

PAUL KELLEN, VIA E-MAIL

After the tragedy in Newtown, Conn., enough is enough. The list of rationalizations for these heinous acts grows ever longer: bullied in school, addiction, unrequited love, personality disorder, overbearing parents, abuse as a child, job loss, bigotry and more. Sadly, too many Americans believe: We will fear no evil because we have guns in our homes. But the perpetrator of the next horrendous act might be there, also. **GLENN HAYES, VIA E-MAIL**

As a substitute teacher, I am aware that the joy of seeing the "Ah ha!" moment will remain my joy of teaching, but I am painfully aware that the safety of students is not based on the "fire drill" that I grew up with. Sadly, we now have the "lockdown." Times have changed, and now is the "Selma" of our times. Now is the time to change: how we deal with gun control and the rights of the Second Amendment; how we deal with mental health and the right to get help without shame; how we deal with the balanced budget and the right of our troubled citizens to have mental health care; how we as a society deal with this tragedy and keep our right to be safe and well. In 1965, voting rights policy changed with the lives lost in Selma, Ala.; in 2012, let gun control and mental health policies change with the lives lost in Newtown, Conn. Eleanor Roosevelt said, "We gain strength, and courage, and confidence by each experience in which we really stop to look fear in the face ... we must do that which we think we cannot." We must change our policies for the sake of our children and generations to come. I demand that history show when the time came, when events changed everything — especially for our children — that we changed.

JANICE WINSTON, VIA E-MAIL

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Keep them as brief as possible, preferably under 100 words.
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Horoscope

♐ Sagittarius **Nov. 23-Dec. 21.** For reasons over which they'll have no control, the people whom you depend on might fail you. Your objective might be harder to reach on your own, but you'll handle it.

♑ Capricorn **Dec. 22-Jan. 19.** You might have to guard against doing things in half measures, but once you realize the stakes at play, hesitation won't be a problem.

♒ Aquarius **Jan. 20-Feb. 19.** If you're not careful, you might be a trifle extravagant with your resources. This is acceptable, provided you aren't equally as generous with someone else's money.

♓ Pisces **Feb. 20-March 20.** There is nothing wrong with having some fun and enjoying yourself, as long as you don't treat serious matters lightly — especially those pertaining to your career.

♈ Aries **March 21-April 19.** Be careful about what you tell others — because if you reveal the wrong things to the wrong person, instead of unburdening yourself it will create more trouble.

♉ Taurus **April 20-May 20.** Be positive and build up your hopes, but also be realistic. If you aren't, all you'll do is make more misery for yourself. Don't use your imagination as an instrument of disappointment.

♊ Gemini **May 21-June 20.** Something you thought to be shoo-in could prove far more difficult to pull off than anticipated. This can be an extremely rewarding day for you if you don't take anything for granted and put in the work.

♋ Cancer **June 21-July 22.** You don't want to hurt anybody's feelings, naturally, but it might be far kinder to be forthright instead of painting a rosy picture that leads to false expectations.

♌ Leo **July 23-Aug. 22.** Certain commercial matters could prove to be far more complicated than they appear, so be prepared for anything. If you're cautions and prudent, you should do just fine.

♍ Virgo **Aug. 23-Sept. 22.** If you start seeking an easy out, you might find only difficulty. By trying to duck challenges, you might only create more.

♎ Libra **Sept. 23-Oct. 23.** Usually, you're the type of person who likes to think a few steps ahead of the game. Keep it up, as careful forethought will be vital.

♏ Scorpio **Oct. 24-Nov. 22.** Your reasoning regarding a joint matter is likely to be a shade sounder than that of your counterpart. Listen to his or her views, because one could be good — but don't discount your judgment. **BERNICE BEDE OSOL**

Across
1 Wedding-cake layer
5 Lingerie buy
8 Feel concern
12 Portends
14 Is on the go
15 "Aquarius" musical
16 Clean the floor
17 Greasy-spoon fare
18 The younger Guthrie
19 Cooks fish, maybe
21 Paddled
23 Crack pilot
24 — Lanka
25 PBS "Science Guy"
26 Tote the irons
30 Diving birds
32 Strut with pride
33 Bowl break
36 Vex
37 Unusual sighting
38 Some little piggies
40 Address parts (2 wds.)
42 Girl at a ball
43 Whale finder
44 Unassuming
45 Yes, to Angus
48 Come to a conclusion
49 Way back when
50 Sign after Taurus
52 Consulting oneself, perhaps
57 Left Bank chums
58 Swerve
60 Gene Autry movie
61 Relate
62 Miss Cinders of the comics
63 "Lohengrin" or "Tosca"
64 Former Clannad singer
65 P.O. service
66 Nudge forward

Down
1 Cough syrup meas.
2 Corn Belt state
3 Idyllic spot
4 Coral habitat
5 Ewe plaints
6 Hwys.
7 Oscar winner Dame Peggy —
8 Biggers' sleuth
9 Burr or Copland
10 Hoosier poet
11 Wash away
13 Ankle injury
14 Clarified butter
20 Hard water?
22 "-- She Sweet"
24 Boot bottoms
26 EMT technique
27 Desert st.
28 Sub seller
29 Vast waters
30 Weaker, as an excuse
31 Located
33 Surfer wannabe
34 Burrower
35 Underwater shockers
37 Plotter
39 Congeal
41 "Fargo" director
42 Slight injury (hyph.)
44 "Leo the Lion" studio
45 Form of quartz
46 Gulf nation
47 A Bronte sister
49 Emanation
51 "La — Bonita"
52 Blend
53 Reindeer herder
54 Cato's route
55 Orchid-loving Wolfe
56 June celebrant
59 Pixie

9			6				5	
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				2				3
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6			2		5	3		
	2				3			5

SUDOKU **LEVEL: EASY**

9	5		7			4		
	7	3		2				1
		6			1		7	
6		5		8	4			
				7				
			1	6		8		5
	6		2			3		
1				5		7	8	
		4			9		5	6

SUDOKU **LEVEL: HARD**

Solution to yesterday's crossword

M	O	W	E	D		A	V	O		V	O	C	A	L
A	L	A	M	O		N	E	O		E	L	O	P	E
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O	O	P		A	Y	L	A			B	O	L	L	S
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P	E	R	R	Y		D	A	D		E	X	E	A	T

How to play Sudoku: Fill in the grid so that every row, every column and every 3x3 box contains the digits 1-9. There is no math involved. You solve the puzzle with reasoning and logic.

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destinations

I love New York (skiing)

Colorado's great, don't get us wrong — but there are plenty of good slopes in the Empire State We've rounded up some mountains you should check out, plus deals each is having as an added incentive

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Windham Mountain

www.windhammountain.com
Here is where you'll find the most snowmaking within a 200-mile radius of Central Park. There are 49 total trails, five terrain parks, plus tubing and an ice rink, all in the quaint town of Windham. Through a partnership with REI, beginners can take advantage of a lift ticket, beginner lesson, rental and bus transportation to and from the mountain.
Day rates: Weekdays/nonholidays: Adults: $52, young adults (13-17): $45, juniors: $37
Weekends/holidays: Adults: $72, young adults (13-17): $65, juniors: $58
Deals: During the mountain's College Week (Jan. 7-11), Windham is offering $25 lift tickets for students with valid ID.

Whiteface Lake Placid

www.whiteface.com
The Adirondacks are host to Whiteface Lake Placid — the highest ski mountain in the east (4,867 feet), featuring the greatest vertical drop in the east (3,430 feet). Of the 86 trails comprising 283 acres, you can ski the very ones that racers did during the 1980 Olympics — and because nearby Lake Placid still has its sports and ski jumping complexes intact, you can check those out as well (or use your afternoon to go tubing or ice skating). Take a breather from the slopes at Lake Placid's cozy eateries and outlet shops, and before you leave the city do a lap around the frozen Mirror Lake in a dogsled.
Day rates: Adults: $84, teens/seniors: $69, junior: $55, 70+: $38
Deals: Buy two days of skiing and two days of lodging and get the third day and night free. Fourth and fifth day/night free packages are also available. On Wednesdays, present any unopened Coca-Cola product at the Whiteface ticket office and get a lift ticket for $42.

More deals

- January is Learn to Ski and Snowboard month in New York, and many mountains are offering deals. Book before Jan. 9 at **www.iskiny.com**.
- Set aside Jan. 10 to hit the slopes: The Ski Areas of New York are offering 10,000 lift tickets for just $10 each that day.
- The Catskill's Winter Sampling Card is a season pass lift ticket to four mountains in the region — Windham, Hunter, Belleayre and Platekill — for $199.
- The 4th Grade Ski & Ride Passport Program lets fourth-grade New Yorkers ski or ride for free up to three times at nearly 30 locations. Adults get a 20 percent discount, too. Visit **www.44free.com** to learn more.

Ski West Mountain

www.skiwestmountain.com
Forty-five minutes north of Albany, Ski West Mountain has 40 trails and a six-lane snow tubing park — one chute is 1,000 feet long with a 100-foot vertical drop. Just stopping by? A two-hour ticket is $27.
Day rates: Weekdays/nonholidays (eight hours): Adults/teens: $42, youth/college/military : $37, seniors: $20, 70+: $5
Weekends/holidays (eight hours): Adults: $52, teens/youth: $32, college/military: $49, seniors: $39, 70+: $5
Deals: The Learn to Ski 3 package for newbie skiers gets you three lessons, three equipment rentals and three lift tickets for $99. In January, the deal drops to just $25.

Gore Mountain

www.goremountain.com
The most terrain in New York State is at Gore, which has four summits and trails facing north, east and south. Ski Magazine recently voted it a top 10 in the east for value, lifts and overall satisfaction.
Day rates: Monday-Wednesday, nonholiday: Adults: $59, teens/seniors: $49, juniors: $35
Thursday-Sunday, nonholiday: Adults: $75, teens/seniors: $59, juniors: $40
Deals: January 7-13's Take Your Kids to Gore Week means that sons and daughters 19 and under ski, ride and tube for free with a full-paid parent. Like Whiteface, Gore Mountain also participates in the Wednesday Coca-Cola promotion.

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d'Arnaud centerpiece of Dickey deal

Mets fans who are praising general manager Sandy Alderson's deal of R.A. Dickey are banking on one name being prominent in the lineup for years to come: Travis d'Arnaud.

d'Arnaud, 23, is the centerpiece of the trade for the Mets. Baseball America ranked him as the No. 17 prospect in baseball going into the 2012 season. Many of those players, such as rookies of the year Bryce Harper and Mike Trout, have already played in the majors, however. He batted .333 with 16 home runs, 52 RBIs and 21 doubles in Triple-A Las Vegas.

He played in just 67 games after suffering a knee injury. He tore the posterior cruciate ligament (PCL) in his left knee in June and was shut down for the rest of the season.

But the Blue Jays said they expected it to be a 10-week recovery period and they were playing it safe. d'Arnaud did not play in the Arizona Fall League as was original scheduled, but the Mets expect him to be fully healthy for spring training.

The Mets had been looking for a catcher in any deal for Dickey, and they got the best one in the minors, according to Baseball America.

The team will also save about $5 million by not re-signing Dickey, which could allow them to sign a free agent outfielder.

METRO

Travis d'Arnaud

JIM MCISAAC/GETTY IMAGES

▶ The Mets were 14 games over .500 in games Dickey started the last three years and 40 games under .500 in games he didn't start.

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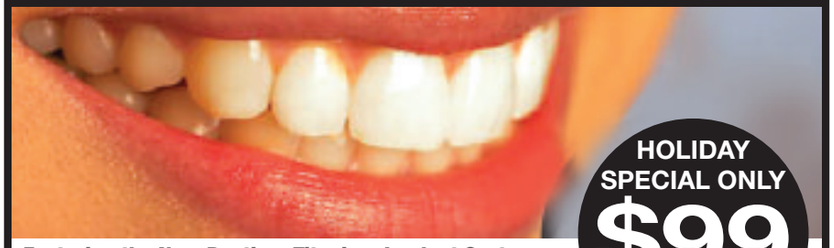

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Cy-onara: Mets unload Dickey

Reigning NL Cy Young winner on his way to Toronto
Team receives elite prospect d'Arnaud, veteran Buck

The reigning NL Cy Young winner is on his way out of Queens.

Mets starter R.A. Dickey has been traded to the Blue Jays, according to multiple reports. The deal had been rumored much of the weekend, with Toronto and New York ironing out the players involved and then waiting on Dickey to sign a contract extension.

Dickey passed a physical yesterday afternoon, the final hurdle to clear in the deal. The Jays were expected to make the deal official yesterday.

The Daily News' Andy martino was first to report Dickey had agreed to a three-year, $30 million deal with Toronto. The deal is reportedly similar to the one the Mets offered.

The Mets will also trade catcher Josh Thole and receive catching prospect Travis d'Arnaud, catcher John Buck and pitching prospect Noah Syndergaard.

Going places

The players involved in the deal are not official yet, but have been widely reported for the past few days.

Mets
SP R.A. Dickey
C Josh Thole
C Mike Nickeas

Blue Jays
C John Buck
C Travis d'Arnaud (AAA)
SP Noah Syndergaard (A)

Dickey won 20 games in 2012 and led the league in both innings pitched (233 2/3) and strikeouts (230). Those numbers helped him win an improbable Cy Young award. It was the Mets' first since Doc Gooden won in 1985. But at 38 years old, the Mets viewed Dickey as an attractive trade chip to bring back prospects.

Syndergaard, a right-handed pitcher, is also a talented prospect, though he is just 20 years old and pitched in Single-A last season. He had a 2.60 ERA with 122 strikeouts in 103 2/3 innings. He was a first-round pick — No. 38 overall — in the 2010 draft by Toronto. The 6-foot-5 pitcher throws in the mid-90s. Though he pitched in both relief and as a starter last season, he projects as a future frontline ace.

Buck batted just .192 with 12 homers last season, but is a nine-year veteran and was an All Star in 2010 when he finished the season with a .281 average and 20 home runs for the Jays.

MARK OSBORNE
mark.osborne@metro.us

NFL in brief

METRO FILE FOLDER

▶ Garrett Reid

Steroids found on Andy Reid's son

EAGLES. A prosecutor investigating the death of Garrett Reid, the son of Eagles head coach Andy Reid, said yesterday that steroids were found in the room where he died of a heroin overdose on Aug. 5.

Investigators said the steroids did not a play a role in Reid's death and therefore no further investigation would be conducted.

Eagles owner Jeffrey Lurie said it was disappointing, but also emphasized there was no evidence to support Reid provided the steroids to anyone else. **METRO**

RG3 setting record for jersey sales

REDSKINS. Robert Griffin III didn't get to play Sunday due to injury, but he's still ringing up merchandise sales.

ESPN reported yesterday that Griffin's No. 10 jersey has sold more in a season than any other jersey since the league began keeping track in 2006. **METRO**

Defense facing questions

There's plenty of blame to go around in the Giants' 34-0 loss to the Falcons on Sunday, but perhaps at the top of the list is a defense that's been pedestrian at best in recent weeks.

"We had some lapses in focus, and guys didn't execute at the level we're capable of," said defensive tackle Chris Canty, who was the only Giant defender to get near Falcons quarterback Matt Ryan, as he registered the lone sack. "We've got to find a way to get those issues fixed."

One of the glaring issues is the lack of a pass rush. Their one-sack output was the fourth time in five games they've had no more than one sack.

KEVIN C. COX/GETTY IMAGES

▶ The Giants' defense has allowed 61 points the last two games.

Defensive end Mathias Kiwanuka was just as despondent when recalling the defensive failures.

"That's embarrassing not just to us, but to anybody who's ever worn a Giant decal on their hat or shirt or anything like that," Kiwanuka said. **TONY WILLIAMS**

New York falls out of playoffs

The loss to the Falcons was damaging to more than just the Giants' egos. They also fell out of the NFC East lead and the playoffs entirely.

Dallas and Washington won Sunday and are tied with the Giants. But because the Giants have the worst division record of the three (2-3), they are technically in third place.

However, if the Giants win out, they will make the playoffs as a wild card regardless. **METRO**

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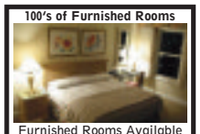

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